

with the Committee in expressing regret to his family that he should have passed away before seeing his experiences in print and contributing, as he had hoped to do, some more of his interesting Assam Reminiscences.—Eds.

(The end.)

## THE RIDDLE OF THE BEARDED PIG.

### A PROBLEM OF DISTRIBUTION.

BY

J. E. KEMPE.

(School of Oriental and African Studies, London University)

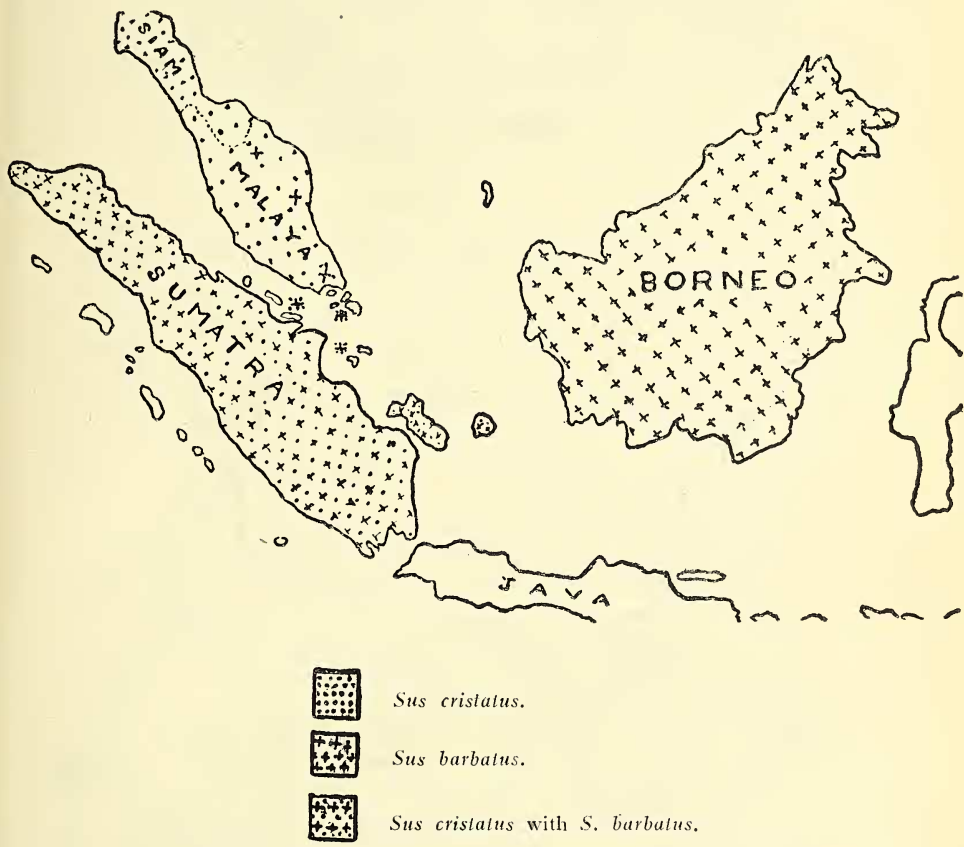
(With 4 plates)

Three distinct species of wild swine have for long been recognized in the western portion of the Malaysian sub-region, that is the area (excluding Celebes and the Philippines), lying south and east of Burma, together with a number of somewhat disputable local forms. These are *Sus cristatus* (local representative of *Sus scrofa* of Europe and western Asia including India and Burma), *S. barbatus* of Sumatra, Borneo and the Riau Archipelago and *S. verrucosus* of Java. The last is not of interest in this discussion and may be dismissed. *S. cristatus* and *S. barbatus* overlap and occur together e.g. in Sumatra. But that the only wild pig of the Malay Peninsula was *S. cristatus* was never in question until 1918, when Dr. W. S. Leicester of the Malayan medical service, stationed at Pekan in the State of Pahang on the east coast of the peninsula some 160 miles directly north of Singapore, shot the sow of a species new to him. Dr. Leicester kept a pack of mongrel dogs and for some years hunted that remote country as a regular pastime. He apparently shot several half grown young pigs as well about the same time, and in December of that year sent the sow's skull to the Director of Museums at Kuala Lumpur (the late Mr. H. C. Robinson). The latter, in his own words, found 'the occurrence so remarkable and so at variance with preconceived ideas of geographical distribution, that, pending further evidence, it was not considered advisable to place the occurrence on record'.

There the matter rested till September 1921 when the writer, stationed at Pekan as District Officer and quite unaware of the foregoing, was shown the skull of a pig shot by an old Chinese named Lee Chu'ah with whom he frequently hunted. Chu'ah shot the animal at Sungei Genoh a week before, a mile or two out of the town. It was an old solitary boar and much emaciated. What impressed the man was its great height and length of leg, the length of its skull, a pallid skin, the tufts of hair under its eyes and above all its whiskery beard. It weighed 244 pounds and he thought that in condition, it should have scaled well over 300—and a Chinese is no mean judge of pig-flesh. Chu'ah had hunted that coast for nearly forty years and never before saw such

a monstrous pig in all the thousands killed by him. (The old man, a great comrade in a lonely place, died two months later.) I at once sent the skull which he gave me to Major Moulton, the Director of Raffles Museum, Singapore. To me it was an astonishing object, and comparative drawings of it and the common *S. cristatus* made the difference more remarkable. It was not I think a very big specimen judging from the measurements of the skull. Chu'ah who combined business with pleasure and a genuine interest in his quarry, had for years kept careful records of his kills. The heaviest recorded pig of the common type was he told me 286 pounds (he showed me a grubby notebook full of Chinese characters and ill-formed English figures, for he was by way of being a scholar), but his pack was probably unequal to stopping any thing much heavier. The tushes of the strange pig were nine inches round the curve and  $4/5$  inch across. The Director of Museums identified the skull at once as that of *Sus barbatus* of Sumatra and Borneo and Riau, and retained it as 'the first authentic record of this species in the Malay peninsula'. In March 1922 there appeared an article in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Straits Branch) No. 85, under the hands of Major Moulton and Mr. H. C. Robinson. The species was accepted as a member of the Peninsula fauna though they thought its presence 'is really due to some extraordinary chance resulting in the landing of a herd from Borneo, the home of the true *S. barbatus*, or from the Riau archipelago'. If, as the writers pointed out, it is a Peninsula species, the geographical position is difficult to explain, but under *very* favourable circumstances individuals might come over from the islands and establish themselves in small numbers for a noticeable period. The verdict was '*not indigenous*', that it was probably the last survivor of a herd that had gained access to Malay peninsula. The matter rested for a time but the question seemed to me, in face of the facts, to be by no means settled.

Seventeen years later, in March 1939, I wrote to the then Director of Museums in Singapore (the late Mr. F. N. Chasen) and enquired whether the Bearded Pig had turned up again since, and if so, what was the present view of the matter. In April of that year he replied that the pig had turned up on several occasions in small numbers on the east coast of the peninsula but not on the west. The latest example was a fine boar from Kota Tinggi, near the southern tip of the peninsula. This specimen was retrieved by Sir Richard Winsted from an Italian who expressed the intention of sending it to Signor Mussolini. He was easily persuaded to hand it over by the suggestion that the head of a *seladang* or any other head would please the Duce just as much, and it was placed in the Raffles Museum. The Director went on to a 'possible' (but most surprising) solution of the presence of the pig in Malaya—it was evident that the Museum authorities were uneasy about it! He stated that the Chief Minister of Johor was certain that 'our *barbatus* pigs are the remains of some introduced by the old Sultan many years ago—for sporting purposes—and may be he is right'. (This aspect is referred to at greater length later).



Map of the western part of the Malaysian Sub-Region showing the known distribution of *Sus* on the larger land areas.

The Javanese species is *S. verrucosus*. The species themselves are divided into several local sub-species.



MALAYA

⊙ Sites of recorded occurrences of *Sus barbatus* in the Peninsula.

NOTE.—A mountain backbone runs down the middle of the Peninsula, altitude up to 7,000 ft.



But this is not the end of the story. In 1939-40 a series of excavations were carried out in deposits in the limestone caves of Kelantan in the north of the Peninsula by the ethnological branch of the Museums Department. At Goa Madu the list of mammalian remains of Neolithic (recent) date includes the bones of both *Sus cristatus* and *S. barbatus*. As the Director wrote in August 1940 (vide *Journ., Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. xviii, Pt. 2 page 7)—the remains prove that the Bearded Pig is truly indigenous in the Malay peninsula. He adds that 'the species was only recently discovered in the Malay States . . . it had been suggested that the few known specimens are the remains of a herd imported by a former Sultan of Johor'.

A year or two later Singapore fell. So the riddle remains for the time unanswered.

## PART II

So the known facts are that the Bearded Pig did inhabit the Peninsula, (certainly the northern part of it near the present Thailand frontier), in a Neolithic age which corresponded here probably to the early Christian era, and that it has in recent years reappeared in the south and east in small numbers. In the interval there is no record of it, though Malay lore has a semi-legendary monster, a lone boar of heroic dimensions existing in the forests, a travellers' tale. In Johor there are stories of a 'great white' pig seen by few. But nothing substantial is to be discovered. There is no record at all of any occurrence of this animal on the western seaboard.

The questions that arise are, is it, by its presence today, to be regarded as indigenous in the sense of being either a still established survivor of Sundaland, or as possibly re-establishing itself after a period of extinction?

*The question of Survival.*—What has happened to *barbatus* during the long period since it was hunted in Neolithic times, not so long ago? The wild pig is not an animal that readily conceals its presence. Most common and usually to be found on the fringes of cultivation, it is both a pest to be slaughtered at any time and the ordinary quarry of the hunter with his dog pack which exists in most villages for sporting and protective purposes. Old Chu'ah was one of scores of semi-professional hunters. Many hundreds or perhaps thousands are killed annually. It seems almost inconceivable that a race of wild swine such as the Bearded Pig with its signal characteristics could have escaped notice. When it has turned up it has provoked astonishment. Its habits do not seem to differ from those of the common *Sus cristatus* nor its natural terrain. *Barbatus* lives side by side in Sumatra with *cristatus*—and in the islands of the Raiu Archipelago—and it is not clear why it should have given way on the Peninsula. It has to be remembered that until quite lately, about fifty years ago, the ecological state of the Peninsula was still primeval, the population very small indeed and confined to the rivers and coasts. Nothing happened then or has since with the opening of the country that could affect its status.

There is, it is true, a large area in Pahang where the interior, covering a country about as big as Yorkshire, is mainly unexplored